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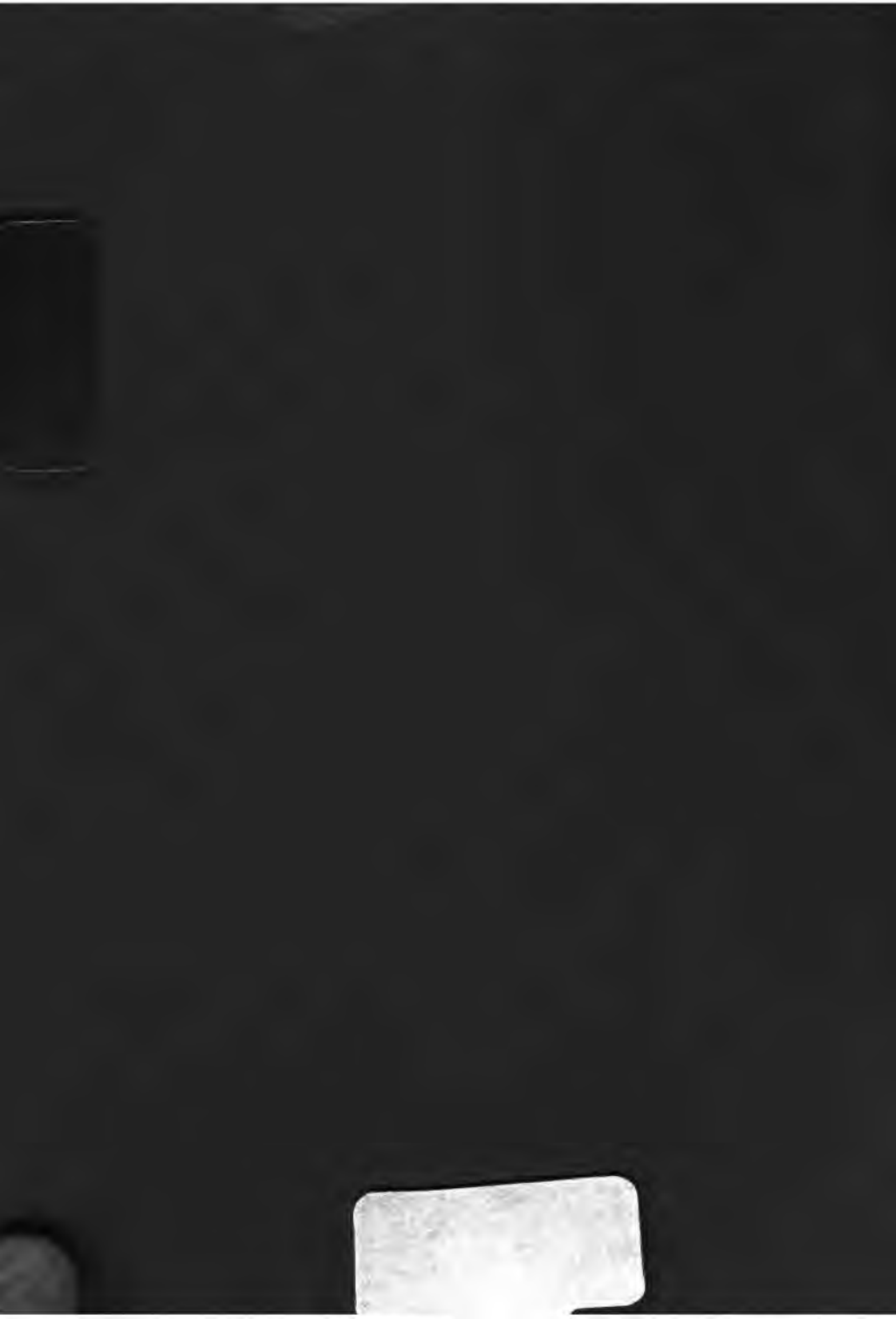
Memorandum

Presented by the Greek Members of the Turkish Parliament

To

The American Commission on Mandates Over Turkey

Published by
THE AMERICAN HELLENIC SOCIETY, Inc.
Columbia University, New York
1919



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Memorandum

Presented by the Greek Members of the Turkish Parliament

To The American Commission on Mandates Over Turkey.

The undersigned Greek deputies, as members of the Turkish Parliament during the whole war, were in the best possible position to observe from the very beginning the sufferings of our people, to understand their sentiments and to realize what their desires and claims may be at the present time. We therefore consider it our duty to submit the following statement to the Honorable American Commission on Mandates over Turkey, whose well known impartiality permits us to believe that the claims of the Greek population in Turkey will be considered favorably and will be eventually made known to your Government as well as to your liberal country.

I.

A brief inquiry is sufficient to make clear the aspirations of the Greek people in Turkey: any Greek of any social standing, whether young or old, man or woman, will quite spontaneously and without the slightest hesitation give the following answer when questioned upon the subject:

1. We demand the total abolition of the Turkish rule over the Greeks.

2. We desire to be united to the Greek Kingdom, thus forming one national state, under a democratic government.

The Greek nation knows its past history and remembers it, our people's hearts are filled with the ambition to create a future equal to their past; this state of mind sufficiently

explains their being utterly adverse to the idea of living under another nation's rule, even if this nation be highly civilized; moreover, their experience of the rule that has weighed so heavily upon them up to this day has been such that it easily explains the willingness of the people to submit, if necessary, to any sacrifices, in order to compass their national unity.

What has this rule been like?

A few cultured men, who contrived to escape on the day Constantinople was taken (May 29th, 1453) took refuge in Italy and brought with them the first spark of civilization, the pure light of which now shines in your great country. Those who were left behind were slaughtered on the very same day; women were enslaved, monuments and works of art were destroyed, and the whole city was set on fire and burnt to ashes; thus the Turkish rule was established.

There followed the dreadful trials of the next five centuries: enslavement, deportation, robbery, plundering, conversions to Mohamedanism by force, a systematic seizing of Christian boys to fill up the Janissary ranks, then the slaughter of 50,000 Greeks in Peloponnese, in 1769, the massacres in Chios, Smyrna, Aivali, Constantinople and Adrianople, during the Greek war of Independence of 1821-1828, the bloody events in Crete and Samos, the massacres in Syria and finally the recent Armenian and Greek tragedies, which ended in the extermination of over 1,500,000 Christians in the course of five years; all these events were no sudden outbreaks of a momentary national hatred, but repeated manifestations of a situation which one may say constitutes the normal state of things in this country. According to the principles of the Turkish rulers, Christians were slaves and nothing more and the lowest Mohamedans had the right to dispose of their lives as they pleased; their honor and their properties and belongings were at the Moslems' mercy and the pains they endured when under torture were the daily entertainments which their masters enjoyed most.

The Turks were never lacking in false pretences to deceive the civilized world each time its wrath was aroused; just at present they are trying, among other strange assertions, to make people believe that the Turkish nation is not respon-

sible for the massacres of the last five years and that the Committee of Union and Progress bears the whole responsibility for these crimes. Sultan Mehmed VI, himself expressed this opinion to the correspondent of the "Morning Post" in a recent interview, as if it were possible for a political party to carry on a great war, during four years against the greatest Powers in the world and to order ferocious slaughter of the non-Moslem populations, without being the true representative of the national will. His Majesty has forgotten that events of this kind have occurred more than once in Turkish history and that the Committee certainly cannot be held responsible for events, which took place before it was formed and after it was dissolved. The Young Turks are, after all, the offspring of the Turkish nation and they exemplify the purest expression of the Turkish soul and mentality; among other things, the Turkish nation bears the responsibility for this political monster's existence, though it now tries to hide its own sins behind it. The Sultan himself who now holds the Committee responsible for every thing done, was a partisan of the German and Turkish alliance, as he has himself officially declared. The only Turk one could ever imagine to be against the Young Turks might be the late ex-Sultan Abd-ul-Hamid who was dethroned by them, and yet he made use of espionage, censorship, persecutions and murders; he established extraordinary courts of Justice and ordered various tortures to be carried out at the police stations; he also gave over to the late General von der Goltz the whole military power of Turkey, after having laid out with him his great Panislamic plan, which was directed against Christianity; it was he who called the German Kaiser the protector of three hundred million Mohammedans, who ordered the Armenian massacres and who fought against all the Christian element in the country; in short, Abd-ul-Hamid did exactly what the Committee did after him, with the sole difference that the Young Turks improved his methods, just as the present rulers of Turkey have improved and perfected theirs.

For instance, the Young Turks also had a gang of murderers at their orders, but they had no guns and cannons, as

do the bands who now serve the Turkish Government in Asia Minor. Neither did the Young Turks know the system of a double Government, i. e., one established at Erzeroum, recruiting troops in spite of the clauses of the Armistice, and another at Constantinople, refusing to acknowledge these doings and pretending to know nothing about them. The man who declared in the Turkish Senate that Wilson's principles or any other democratic system would only mean ruin and destruction to Turkey was the now famous Grand Vizier Ferid Pasha. In an essay published long before the persecutions had started, Ahmed Ferid Bey, Turkish Minister and colleague in the Cabinet of Ferid Pasha, expresses the opinion that the only means of salvation for the Turkish Empire is the extermination of the peoples in it who do not speak the Turkish Tongue. Whether they belong to the absolutist, constitutional, unionist or liberal party, the Turks have been, are and always will be the same; hard towards the weak, cringing before the powerful, and fanatical enemies to every Christian, with devastation and destruction as their chief occupation. This nation has never produced anything and has only destroyed what others have built. The only economical measures applied are plunder and theft, their only means of ruling the country are violence and slaughter. They contrived to deceive Europe during a whole century, by using all kinds of artful designs and promising reforms, which, whenever applied, were followed by outbreaks more ferocious than before. Their history is now so well-known that no one can believe thier false promises, their calumnies about other nations, their forged statistics or their traditional diplomatic policy, which consists in disturbing and destroying the harmony existing between the civilized Powers.

Formerly, when the vacillating European policy found no other solution of the question than the maintenance of the Turkish Empire, we were forced to submit to the tyrant's stern rule, for diplomacy had left us at his mercy. Fortunately, this power and strength are now shattered; the monster is worn out and exhausted and can terrify us no longer. He fills us now only with disgust. Had the Allied Powers not undertaken to carry out the conditions of the

armistice and to solve the Eastern question, i. e., had we remained alone against the Turks, we would have had the strength to take away from them their broken weapons. This is the surest sign that the Turkish domination over other nations is now a thing of the past. This domination was a stain on civilization and its abolition will prove beneficial to the Turks themselves; having proved unable to govern their own people and living henceforth in Asia Minor, between the boundaries of Armenia and Greece, they will finally realize that there is such a thing as justice among human beings and that it is the only source of citizens' rights and duties; such a rule will enable them, in case they should prove capable of it, to conquer by the development of civilization the country they wanted to keep everlastingly under their sway, by the use of violence and oppression.

On the contrary, the Greeks and Armenians living in Turkey have proved in various ways that they deserve being given their independence and freedom; although these peoples have lived under the hardest bondage known in history, they have managed to maintain their national existence; they have founded prosperous communities, and built schools and charitable establishments; they have engaged in various trades and handicrafts; they have built beautiful homes and were even the architects of many of the Turkish buildings of note; they were progressive in all professional lines and managed to use the knowledge acquired from their contemporaries to improve the situation of the country, whose rulers had enslaved them and this in spite of the various obstacles raised by the government. They fostered their national literature, they produced poets, philosophers and authors; all trades, industry and shipping were carried on by them; they were at the head of financial affairs; with the exception of the cereals, which were largely cultivated by the Turks, all the other products, which require a careful and methodical cultivation were, one may say, monopolized by them.

Moreover, the Greeks took an active part in the struggle of the whole race against the Turks. During the last war they formed the nucleus of the national movement in Greece in favor of the Allies and of the organization for the National

Defence in Macedonia; they fought by the side of the Allies and in Turkey herself they, like the Armenians, lost hundreds of thousands of their nationals as victims to the ferocity of the Turks, who declared, together with the Germans, that the Greeks deserved this punishment for having refused to fight with the Turks and for having openly shown their partiality to the Allied Powers.

These two Christian peoples in Turkey have the right to be proud of their achievements in the present and the past, and they have shown by what they have done while in bondage what they may be expected to accomplish when once they have won back their independence.

To the above statement we would add the following. Those, who undertake the settlement of the Oriental Question should not consider in the case of the Greeks the question of their independence only. It is a well-known fact that our nation deeply feels the necessity of a union with Greece and that this longing is so strong that is impossible for any of us to conceive the idea of freedom, independence and political existence, without connecting this with the idea of a complete union with Greece. As far as the essentials of our national life are concerned, this union is already a fact that has been automatically accomplished during the period of Turkish domination, in spite of the efforts, which these barbarous and foolish rulers vainly made to check it by erecting Chinese walls between us and Greece. Among other ways, in which Greece has influenced our institutions, our educational system is exactly similar to the system applied in Greece; there are Greeks from Turkey in every Greek battalion and in every unit of the Greek navy.

In every war waged by Greece and in every revolution of Greeks, aid was given by the Greeks of Turkey. No institutions were established there without a contribution from us. All Greek families living in Turkey have relatives in Greece. Our descent from a common stock, our language, religion, customs, traditions and national consciousness are such strong ties between us, that any Greek from Constantinople or Rhodes always feels at home in Greece, and no Athenian or Corfiote, who happens to come to Turkey ever considers

himself a stranger here. The difference between our condition of servitude in Turkey and the freedom under democratic government in Greece would be quite sufficient to strengthen this relationship and affection, had this been necessary. During the war we saw how complete freedom was given to the Macedonian Turks to oppose the men who are now the members of the present Greek Government; they did it in opposition to the unanimous sentiment of the Greeks here and to that of an overwhelming majority in Greece, and at the same time the Turks brutally wronged and punished us for our inward thoughts and desires.

II.

With regard to the practical application of the said principles, through the realization of the Greek aims in certain parts of the former Turkish Empire, we deem it necessary to make the following observations:

With these claims and interests, the following countries are concerned:

1. **WESTERN THRACE.**—The Turkish Government has never given up the hope of concluding a victor's treaty. With regard to Thrace, they generally claim the recovery of what they lost during the Balkan war. It is needless to say that Western Thrace has ceased to form part of the Turkish Empire by virtue of a treaty and though the Turks are quite capable of trying to injure an ally, yet from the Greek point of view there can be no question of any other than a Greek and Bulgarian dispute as far as Western Thrace in concerned. As to the Bulgars, they are a decided minority in that country as compared to the Greeks; and their civilization is inferior to that of the Greek inhabitants; moreover they have proved by their participation in this war that they are incorrigible fomenters of trouble in the Balkans, and they advance no serious arguments to support their claims on Western Thrace. Besides, the way in which the submarine war was carried on clearly shows that the removal of the Bulgars from the Aegean coast is a question of security for Greece, as well as of preventive defense for the Allies, who were perfidiously betrayed by the country they themselves had created.

2. EASTERN THRACE.—It is well-known that the Turks' brutal violence has been given full scope in this part of the country ever since the Balkan war; Eastern Thrace was never left in peace, though nature has endowed her with all the gifts that make a country happy and prosperous.

The Greek population amounts to 320,000 inhabitants, and forms the majority in the country.

The Turkish Government indirectly acknowledged this in the official statistics of the Vilayet elaborated in 1901 and 1903, according to which the Greek population amounted to 272,000, the resident subjects of the Greek kingdom, who amounted to 30,000 not being included. According to the same statistics, the Mohamedans, belonging to the Turkish or to any other race amount to 290,000 and are manifestly in a minority, as compared to the total non-Moslem population, which amounts to 413,000.

3. WESTERN ASIA MINOR.—This country is the cradle of Hellenic civilization and is connected with Greece by historical, religious, geographical and economic ties; its Greek population exceeds 1,000,000 as has been acknowledged by a pro-Turkish German author, Professor Karl Dieterich,(vid. Das Griechentum Kleinasiens. Leipzig 1915, p. 32). This country is the only refuge left to hundreds of thousands of Christians in the interior, in case they should want to escape foreign and particularly Turkish rule.

A single visit to Smyrna, a city of decidedly Greek character, where the Greek language is commonly used, would prove clearly how strong are the claims of the Greeks to this country. Moreover, all the Turkish statesmen, from Mahmoud Shefket Pacha down to Ferid Pacha have very convincingly expressed the following opinion, which is incontestably true, i. e., that the Islands and the coast opposite them can by no means be separated, because this separation would be ruinous for both, as well from the economic as from the military point of view. This country is not only Greek within the limits of the present Greek occupation, it is Greek down to its most southern point. When once it comes under the rule of a national and liberal Government, the country will freely develop itself and progress accordingly. In spite of

the loud outcry raised by the Turkish Government and press, as well as by those who support their protests, it is a fact that the Turkish natives, tired of being misgoverned, have found the Greek occupation satisfactory. For this reason places not within the limit of this occupation have requested that it be extended and the Mohamedans of the district of Salihli, fleeing from the Turkish "liberators" recently sought and found shelter within the Greek zone. There really are gangs which devastate the country, but such gangs always existed and they used to pursue their destructive work with still greater activity before the occupation. The number of Greeks who were murdered or driven away before the occupation exceeds 200,000. The unfortunate occurrences that followed the occupation are certainly distressing, but they are by no means to be compared to the preceding catastrophe. The destruction of the Erythrean Peninsula in 1914, where not a stone was left standing (all the Greek inhabitants, amounting to 70,000 having totally disappeared) as well as the destruction of Aivali in 1917, are infinitely graver and sadder than the slaughter of 2,000 Greeks, recently carried out at Aidin by order of the Turkish Government. These bands were first organized in Asia Minor under Halim Pasha and during the first year of Rahmi Bey's Government. It is not at all surprising to find that such events did not take place in the Italian zone, for such gangs were only formed in places which were considered as the strongest centres of Greek expansion, the points now occupied by the Greeks and the coast along the Black Sea and Thrace being considered as such by the German Generals.

2. Moreover, the Turkish Government is not so foolish as to fail to understand that it might exhaust the Allies' patience and generosity in case it tried to carry on the struggle with Italy in spite of the armistice, by organizing bands and sending officers, guns and ammunition to strengthen them. It also foresees and dreads the application in the capital itself of such measures as international law permits in case of a violation of official treaties, which measures, if applied, would immediately cause the disappearance of the gangs and would thus put a stop to these misdoings.

3. The Greek Army in Asia Minor is strong enough to assist the Allied Italian Army in case such disorders should occur in the Italian zone; its first duty would then be to prevent the gangs from using the Greek zone as a refuge and as a place for concentrations. These are the reasons why the Turkish Government dares not cause disturbances in the Italian zone, for there can be no such thing as real friendship between Turkey and Italy or any other Christian nation; books, bearing the title "Our secular enemies are the Italians" are in the hands of the Turkish schoolboys. Sworn declarations that they would never speak or have any dealings with Italians are still held binding by many Turks. During the struggle with the gangs, it would appear that certain excesses were committed by the Greeks who were exasperated by the crimes committed by the Turks. No one desires to justify these excesses, and least of all the Greek authorities, which indemnify all who have suffered and have already condemned 61 Christians, of whom one was condemned to death, 6 to hard labor and 12 to penal servitude. We should like to know how many men have ever been condemned by the Turkish Government for crimes committed since the beginning of the war and what inquiries were instituted by it into the massacres of the Greeks in Aidin.

Whatever line of action the Turkish Government may adopt, it must finally be convinced that the measures it takes against a nation that claims its independence will not be favorably looked in by the Allies and we are sure that the Greeks in Asia Minor will not permit the Greek army to withdraw but will fight for its retention to the bitter end.

4. CONSTANTINOPLE.—Turkey has no right to this city, to which she has brought only destruction and ruin. The apparent majority of the Turks over the Greeks vanishes when all the non-Moslem population is taken into account.

There is a large Greek population in Constantinople, consisting of several hundreds of thousands of Greeks, who, notwithstanding their hatred of the Government, have not only achieved economic independence but have even succeeded in gaining economic supremacy, thanks to their moral and

intellectual qualities. The Turks, on the other hand, produce nothing, they undertake nothing on their own initiative, they have lived in the past and still live today on the property of the Christians, confiscated by the aid of the Government, or on the taxes levied principally on the Christians. We must add that this crowd of wasters is doomed to disappear as soon as order shall be established.

The Turkish Government has invented a new and as yet unknown claim on this city; they pretend that Constantinople is a sacred centre of Islam. And yet this city was the stronghold of Chirstianity against Mohammedanism during the apogee of Islamism and during the period of the Arabian supremacy; the only Turkish features in Constantinople are the mosques, which were built by the Greeks and Armenians and at their expense. It is true that there exists a verse in the Koran, urging the Mohammedans to strive to conquer Constantinople, not because this city is considered sacred, but because it was the centre of the Christian religion, the conquest of which was planned by the Prophet. Verses of this kind are to be found in great numbers in this anti-Christian book, directed against the Christian countries and nations; if the former verse is considered to justify the maintenance of Turkish domination over Constantinople, may not the other verses justify the intended extermination of the Greeks and Armenians and the accomplishment of this "sacred work."

If the future of Constantinople is to be settled on the basis of religion, it is universally known that Rome and Byzantium are the two Christian cities par excellence. The capital of the Roman Empire was transferred here in order that Christianity might triumph; the first church in this city was founded by an Apostle; Christianity spread from here to the Balkan States and Russia; many Oecumenical Councils were held here; it was here that some of the wisest of the Church Fathers helped to spread Christianity; and it was on the city walls that the last of the Paleologi, with Cardinal Isidore and those who fought by their side, declared that they were struggling for the glory of Christianity.

Constantinople was a Greek city in very ancient times;

it was the Hellenic capital, during the Middle Ages, and it is today no less Hellenic, its economic and cultural progress being due solely to the Greeks, while the Turks have brought in barbarism and have only wrought destruction.

5. BLACK SEA.—The Greek population of the Pontus regions on the coast of the Black Sea, together with those who have taken refuge in Russia and the Caucasus exceeds 800,000, and if, for geographical reasons, they cannot realize their desire to be united to Greece, they possess the necessary elements to form a free and independent commonwealth, which could be in contact and close collaboration with the Armenian State.

6. ANATOLIA.—The Greeks, who will remain in the interior of Asia Minor, being in a minority there, will have to depend on the protection offered by the Powers and they hope to have their civil and political rights and the free management of their national affairs thus guaranteed to them.

Hellenism rejoices in the victories of the Allies and the liberation of Serbs, Rumanians, Czechs, Poles and others. It firmly believes in the justice and generosity of the Great Allied Powers and anxiously awaits their noble action in effecting the union of the Greek people with Greece and the establishment of an Armenian State. Hellenism feels very grateful for the permission granted to the Greek army to occupy Smyrna, but on the other hand it does not conceal its uneasiness, as this act of justice toward Hellenism was long postponed; thus also the desires of the population of the Dodecanese have not been fulfilled; the people of Northern Epirus is still in distress; the occupation of Smyrna has not extended as far as it was expected to extend; the future of Thrace has not been decided; and while these most important Greek questions are still unsolved, the sacrifice of Constantinople is required of us under some form of mandatory government. This solution does not exclude the possibility of including Thrace, which is Greek in character, in this projected new State, and thus sacrificing these Greek interests and possibly curtailing the rights of the Greeks in other parts of the Turkish Empire.

We like to believe that all these doubts will soon be dispelled, as it is impossible for the United States, where the rights of small nations were first proclaimed, and for England and France, who have for the last century protected us so generously, and for Italy, who owes her greatness to the principles on which our rights are based, to permit in the Near East the creation of a miniature Poland at the expense of Hellenism. We hope that the Greek claims will be favorably passed upon at the Peace Conference and that our national unity will be realized and that peace and order will be restored in this country, and that justice will be done to all these peoples, including the Armenians. The tyrannical domination of a barbarous race will then be replaced by the emulation and collaboration of free nations in the works of civilization and progress.

EMMANUELIDES, Deputy of Smyrna.
CHARALAMBIDES, Deputy of Constantinople.
TSORBAJOGLOU, Deputy of Constantinople.
EUCLIDES, Deputy of Rodosto.
DEMETRIADES, Deputy of Metra.
NEOPHYTOS, Deputy of Gallipoli.
SIMEONOGLOU, Deputy of Smyrna.
MEIMAROGLOU, Deputy of Smyrna.
ARZOGLOU, Deputy of Amisos (Samsoun).
KALINOGLOU, Deputy of Nigde.
KEVESSIDES, Deputy of Afion-Karahissar.

The name of Kosmides, Deputy of Constantinople, does not appear because he was absent from the city at the time the Memorandum was signed.